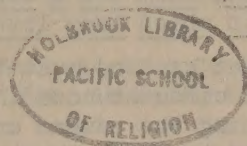


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CHRISTIAN COUNCILS - THORN IN THE FLESH OF THE CHURCHES

by John Masaaki Nakajima

In the report drawn-up by the one hundred participants of the First WCC World Consultation on Christian Councils which was addressed to the member councils and churches of the WCC, we said: "We see Councils as tools in the hands of God as He renews His Church and manifests and deepens the unity given in Christ to the Churches". For me, this was a new insight.

The First World Consultation on Christian Councils was held June 28-July 7 at Geneva and attended by Dr. Takaaki Aikawa, NCC vice chairman and myself (Matthew Ogawa attended as an EACC representative) from Japan.

Dr. Lukas Vischer of the WCC Faith and Order Commission made one of the keynote addresses entitled "Christian Councils--Instruments of Ecclesial Commission" in which he said: "The ecclesial reality is not to be sought in the Christian councils but in the communion among the churches - in their encounter with one another and with the world. As structures, Christian Councils have only an instrumental ecclesiological significance in the promotion of this communion - in bringing it to birth and helping it to grow...the Christian Councils are real instruments of fellowship among the churches only if they help to strengthen unity in ever new ways."

To think of the role of the NCC as the instrument for bringing unity and possible union of the churches was for me a new insight. It was on my way home from the Council when I passed through Jerusalem that I witnessed the necessity of the council being such an instrument. As an Oriental Jerusalem and the Near East have been so remote to me - so much so that the issues which the people in that area are facing had never become real to me. But when one witnesses, as I did, a Palestinian Arab YMCA General Secretary having all of his luggage closely inspected by an Israelite customs official while leaving mine untouched or when one views several different processions by different branches of Christianity on the Via Dolorosa in the Old City of Jerusalem or when one hears an Israelite guide telling one thing and an Arab guide another about the same issue or when one knows, as I came to know, that an Anglican bishop--elect cannot be consecrated in his own church in Jerusalem because of his Arab origin and when one observes three holidays in succession--Islamic Friday, Jewish Saturday and Christian Sunday--one cannot help but realize the complex and miserable state of the divisions and distortions of mankind. Certainly, this must be one of the reasons why Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem as he descended the Mount of Olives.

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CHRISTIAN COUNCIL - THORN IN THE FLESH OF THE CHURCHES (continued)

Our report to the member churches and councils stated: "In two countries a council has disappeared already, giving place to a United Christian Church." But this is only two out of the 66 councils which were present. The division of Jerusalem exists all over the world. That is why the councils are still a necessity. As Lukas Vischer said, "the council is the thorn in the flesh of the churches; they are a constant reminder to the churches of the anomalous situation in which they live."

What can and must the NCCJ do in light of this report and in light of the present circumstances in which the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), undergoing the severe crisis of possible dissolution, finds itself. Are we prepared to cope with this issue of unity, or should we?

Councils and Justice

Because I noted the absence of the East Pakistan Christian Council (at the Consultation) I proposed that the report should express the deep Christian concern of the participants for those councils which were not able to attend because of unhappy political situations. Immediately one of the participants reacted negatively, saying that it was a dangerous proposal since it represented some political compassion toward the Bengali and Indian governments. The proposal was not adopted; this, in itself brought home to me again the limitation of this kind of consultation in which countries having various backgrounds participate. But, why can't we as Christians freely express our Christian concern for one another without being misunderstood?

It was significant that, at a regional meeting of the delegates from Asia, the Near East and the Pacific, a clear statement was drawn up, mainly through the initiative of some Arab delegates, regarding our grievance over the catastrophic conditions caused by the political conflicts in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Middle East and Pakistan. In this report, we said, "Because of our conviction that it is the task of the Church to bring peace and justice in the world, we now commit ourselves to the above, and urge the WCC to use its international influence to find permanent and just solutions to these problems." Although this was not discussed at the plenary sessions, it is significant that the delegate from West Pakistan participated in drawing up this statement.

On the whole, the consultation evaded critical political issues. Were we so polite not to embarrass some people whose positions may differ from ours? If we, as representatives from councils around the world, could not speak out about what we as Christians should be doing to solve some of the burning issues of our day, how dare we sit back and expect the World Council of Churches to tackle them for us?

Councils and Development

I must admit that I was relieved to get back to Japan after a month's travel. Now, I have no worry about tipping, drinking water of sanitation; nor do I have to encounter people with hands stretched to me in various ways. No longer do I have to witness the unpleasant situations where great hordes of poor people are living in a land controlled by a few rich elite. Nor do I have to worry about the unexpected delays or time-changes announced by the various transportation agencies.

I am not saying this to brag about my country. But, in reflecting on the whole matter of the churches' responsibility for development, it raises serious problems for me. Japan has reached high stages of development without the aid of Christianity. Of course, we Japanese Christians often say that, although we are in the minority, we have contributed in the building up of our nation and towards the development of our country. From an objective viewpoint, however, the Christian contribution to development has been minimal in Japan.

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CHRISTIAN COUNCIL - THORN IN THE FLESH OF THE CHURCHES (continued)

When I say this, I am remembering that there are countries which are not yet developed where Christianity has been in existence for centuries. There are so-called 'Christian countries' where the state of the nation is so bad that there is nothing but injustice of all sorts and maldistribution is highly in evidence. What did Christianity contribute towards the nation-building and development of these countries?

In the report which we drew up at the Consultation we said that Christian Councils have a task to do in the field of development. But, in reflecting on this, I must ask: Are we qualified to be engaged in this task? Can Christianity really contribute to nation-building? Or are we saying the Christianity of the past was ineffective but all of a sudden the Christianity of today has become effective? Are we condemning the Christianity of the past in saying that we today have the task of assisting in the area of development? Perhaps so? Even so, perhaps we must recognize that Christianity is not necessarily needed to develop a country.

Conclusion

The report which we addressed to the member councils and churches concludes with the following statement on which I close my brief reflections: "The other great need is to give fresh and exciting meaning to the word 'ecumenical', which for too many has become a tired word. People need to be liberated from soul-destroying imprisonment within one small fraction of a single ecclesiastical tradition. Ecumenism, rightly understood, is an adventure, full of the joy of the Gospel and the excitement of finding new brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a call to Christians to join hands across denominational boundaries to engage with new freedom and fresh spontaneity in the service of a world divided by injustice and beset with fear. Christ calls us to be ministers of reconciliation, channels by which he can bring men and women in to the new humanity of which he is the head. This is the ecumenical task which councils, like churches, exist to serve."

BAPTIST REMMEI DEBATE SELF-RELIANCE ISSUE

A heated debate took place over the issue of "self-reliance" at the 25th Annual meeting of the Japan Baptist Convention (Nihon Baputesuto Remmei), which met at Amagi-Sanso, July 20-23.

A quarter of a century ago 16 churches and 25 delegates met to establish the Japan Baptist Convention. At the 1971 Convention 150 churches sent 290 persons to participate in the annual affair. Under the theme, "All to the Glory of God", the participants heatedly debated the issue of "self-reliance". All discussion, including the two main items on the agenda--the amending of the constitution and the election of the new officers--centered on the Convention's determination to achieve total financial self-support by 1977. The whole tone of the convention could be best expressed "the experiencing of new birth pangs".

General Secretary (re-elected) Yoshikazu Nakajima commented: "The Convention revealed the fact that the consciousness of selfhood has become heightened among all the constituents. We did not have time to discuss the other important issue, namely that of cooperation. What is the origin upon which our cooperation depends? What is the tie that binds us together? These are the questions which we will have to tackle within the coming months."

The Convention elected Rev. Shuichi Matsumura as president and Rev. Hidehiko Fujita, as vice-president.

TAKAMI REPORTS ON VISIT TO DACCA

Mr. Toshihiro Takami, Associate Secretary of the NCCJ Division of Service, upon receipt of an emergency cable from WCC Commission on Inter Church Aid and Relief and World Service (CICARWS), visited Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan, during the period of July 8-14. The purpose of the visit was to join CICARWS's newly appointed Asia Secretary, Kentaro Buma, to meet some of the church leaders in East Pakistan as well as government people and personnel from International Relief and Rehabilitation agencies in Dacca in order to survey and gather as much information as possible for study and the making of recommendations to CICARWS concerning appropriate relief and rehabilitation activities for the flood and cyclone victims of last year.

The following is a brief summary report given to JCAN by Takami: "The WCC's Relief and Rehabilitation activities inside East Pakistan should be distinguished from similar activities being offered to East Pakistan refugees on the Indian side of the border (for which WCC is at present raising 4½ million dollars). Our purpose inside East Pakistan is to make recommendations for helping the flood and cyclone victims. Upon gathering information from various sources we find it would be difficult to draw a line between the flood victims and the victims of the disturbances which have occurred since March 25.

Reliable information indicated that there were numerous refugees within East Pakistan, as well as on the Indian side, most of whom were Hindus, who have been denied the right to receive any help even though they possess the government ration cards....Dacca is under strict military control but we heard explosions by resistance groups every night. The population of Dacca has decreased to less than 1/3rd of its March 25 number and not many people are returning even though 'peace' has been restored. Although figures cannot be accurately given, we were told that most of the Hindu population had fled to the Indian border but that there still remain about 2 million Hindus within E. Pakistan.

Both Bengali people and government sources, as well as International agencies, were in agreement that there may be a very serious food shortage after September 1971 due to the shortage of workmen and the disruption of the transportation system. Estimates of food scarcity varied from one source to another; some say 2 million tons, others say 4 million tons of food will need to be imported. In any event there will be a serious food shortage which will surpass that of last year....The Pakistani government and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the UN are trying to bring in large quantities of food; however, the capacity of the present system for distribution is not more than ½ million tons.

All those to whom we talked were greatly concerned about a possible future outbreak of serious communicable diseases--especially cholera, smallpox and malaria. This is largely feared because of the recent break down of the government environmental control and the lack of sufficient preventive medical facilities.

As to the transportation system, the only effective means of transporting large quantities of cargo are the river boats. However, most of these are being used by the military which is one of the main reasons why we could not transport food and medicine thus far.

International agencies and volunteers (already in Dacca) are anxious to be engaged in activities for the suffering people; but, under the present circumstances, very little can be done. Several informers said well over 90% of the vehicles and boats which belong to the UN agencies have been confiscated and used by the military. Some Bengali people urged us not to send any moveable aid material either in terms of food or other materials because they would only be used to strengthen the military. But the church leaders are trying to find ways to help the suffering people regardless of race, creed, religion- or, for that matter, whether they be West or East Pakistani." (Takami reports that recommendations have been made to the WCC which will be announced later).

PRAYER SERVICE ON 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF WAR'S END

On Sunday, August 15, the 26th anniversary of the end of World War II, Christians will attend a 3:00 p.m. service at Chidorigafuchi Cemetery in Tokyo (Usually, this service is held in the early morning when the date does not fall on Sunday). The service is sponsored by the National Christian Council but persons from many non-member as well as member organizations will participate. Rev. Takenori Eguchi of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Koiwa Church will speak and others will give testimonials.

Following the prayer meeting the Yasukuni Demonstration Committee plans to hold a demonstration to protest the Yasukuni Shrine Bill.

OKUNAKAYAMA INTERNATIONAL WORK CAMP

An International Work Camp will be held at Okunakayama Youth Hostel (Seigakuryo) from August 17-26. Participation is limited to 40 Junior High, Senior High and College age youth. Please contact or telephone Mr. Toshiaki Kusunoki at the Japan Christian Service League, Japan Christian Center, 551 Totsuka-machi 1-chome, Rm. 22, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Tel. (03) 202-0486-7 immediately, since there are a few vacancies.

A. K. REISCHAUER DIES

News has come of the death of another of Japan's veteran missionaries. Dr. August Karl Reischauer, 92, who spent 30 years prior to World War II as a Professor of Philosophy at Meiji Gakuin and Japan Theological Seminary, died on July 10th at a retirement home in California. Dr. Reischauer is remembered as the founder of Tokyo Woman's College and Japan Rowa Gakkoo (Japan School for the Deaf). He is the father of former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Dr. Edwin O. Reischauer, and is the author of Japanese Buddhism for which he received an honorary D.D. degree from New York University.

ESTHER HIBBARD NEW FCM PRESIDENT

At the annual Fellowship of Christian Missionaries Conference, held at Shigisan-so in Nara prefecture July 21-23, Esther Hibbard was elected as the second woman president in FCM history. Dr. Hibbard is an IBC missionary living in Sendai, Miyagi prefecture and teaching at Tohoku Gakuin.

Other 1971-72 officers are: Vice-President, Ivan Dornon, Sendai; Secretary, Mrs. William Draper, Sendai; Treasurer, Armin Kroehler, Aizu Takata-machi, Fukushima prefecture. The Fellowship embraces missionaries from some 25 denominations and mission boards. Inquiries about membership may be addressed to Mrs. William Draper, 13-9, Kokubun-cho 2-chome, Sendai Shi, Miyagi Ken 980.

JONES 10TH VISIT TO JAPAN

E. Stanley Jones, world-wide evangelist, will come to Japan for his tenth time in October; he will go to 40 cities throughout Japan, speak at 20 schools and the same number of laymen's meetings in addition to holding Ashram in eight different places. Mary Webster will accompany him. Jones' first participation in Evangelistic campaigns in Japan was in 1949; Jones' evangelism previously has been handled by the NCC but, with the carrying out of the restructuring by the Council, it was dropped and is now put on a broader cooperative basis. The Central Committee for Jones Evangelism, 3-19 Ebara-cho, Nakano-ku, Tokyo (c/o Ekoda Kyokai) has as its chairman, Rev. Tsunenori Takase and Sendo Ebisawa as the General Secretary.

HEADLINE-MAKING EVENTS

. compiled by Ichiji Yokota

PRIME MINISTER SATO'S NEW CABINET AND KEY OFFICIALS OF LDP were announced on July 5th. Shigeru Hori, Secretary General, Yasuhiro Nakasone, Chairman, Executive Council, Zentaro Kosaka, Chairman, Policy Affairs Research Council, are the officials. In the new cabinet, Takeo Fukuda was appointed as Foreign Minister, Kakuei Tanaka as International Trade and Industry Minister and Mikio Mizuta as Finance Minister. A younger member of the Sato faction, Noboru Takeshita was named as Chief Cabinet Secretary. The only one member of the reshuffled cabinet from pre-election days is Sadanori Yamanaka, Minister of State, who will take charge of Okinawa Affairs.

MEMBERS OF THE JAPAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION WHICH includes 65,000 medical practioners withdrew from the Health Insurance system on July 1st, stating the boycott will not end until the government clarifies its position on the reform of the insurance system.

FOREIGN CURRENCY HOLDINGS REACHED \$7,599,000,000.00 at the end of June according to the Finance Ministry.

PRIME MINISTER EISAKU SATO ATTENDED THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY of president Chung Hee Park at Seoul, Korea on July 1st. During his conference with President Park, Sato offered loan assistance from Japan for the construction of a subway system in Seoul.

A KOMEITO DELEGATION TO PEKING SIGNED A JOINT COMMUNIQUE on July 2nd which includes a five point policy for normalizing Sino-Japanese relations. One of the five principles admits the Government of the Peoples' Republic of China to be the only legitimate government to represent China.

ALTHOUGH JAPANESE GOVERNMENT IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN SHOCKED by Nixon's dramatic decision to visit Peking, Prime Minister Sato announced in his policy speech at the Congress on July 17th that there would not be any new direction in the Government's approach to the China issue.

ATTEMPTS BY A SEGMENT OF THE LDP AND OTHER PARTIES TO INTRODUCE resolutions urging early normalization of relations with China were dead-locked on July 24th, the final day of the 66th extraordinary Diet session, as some LDP members withdrew at the time of the final decision.

THE ANNUAL WHITE PAPER ON NATIONAL LIFE WAS PRESENTED TO THE Cabinet meeting on July 20th by the Economic Planning Agency. The paper analyzes the bad effects of the Higher Economic Growth on the national life and highly evaluates the Consumer and Community movements of people who are opposed to these conditions.